

Holiness - Introduction to 1 Peter

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Bruce: Good morning, brave men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: It's great to be with you. I'm going to be substituting for Ted and for Don for the next couple of weeks. (*Laughter.*) It's nice to be with you. You know, I was traveling the last four weeks, all PNC related. A couple of you thought I was taking a long vacation, but it was all work related. Let me see. I was in Louisville, Philadelphia, Albuquerque, Dallas, Santa Fe, Birmingham, and Scranton, all on every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the past month. So it's nice to be back with you. I certainly missed all of you, and I trust that the Lord was pleased to honor Himself, and I know He did, through Ted and Don, and I thank them both very much.

One of the great joys I have of being a part of this group with you men is realizing this: that team work is really that whatever I do well by myself, I'm going to do it better when I do it with you.

Participant: Amen!

Bruce: And that's what I feel about Ted and Don. Whatever I do well by myself, I'm going to do it better when I do it with Ted and Don, because of their teaching. So brothers, thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thanks. (*Applause.*) Well, Don, let's prepare ourselves for what the Lord might have for us today. Let's quietly go before Him and realize that He alone is God. (*Music.*)

Indeed, You are our "eternal Father, who is strong to save, whose arms have bound the restless waves." Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for His mercy, for His obedience. Father, as we talk about Your holiness, and how the implications are so critical for us and our society, may You be pleased to open our eyes once more, that we might behold Your glory, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Well, Don and Ted have done a wonderful job the last four weeks, teaching us about the theology of holiness and righteousness. If you recall, just a quick summary, there is a righteousness that is implanted in us at our regeneration. When God is pleased to regenerate us, He implants His righteousness within us. Righteousness is defined very loosely as right wisdom, the ability to make right decisions. And then His righteousness is imputed to us at our justification. And then, as a result of our sanctification, there is what I would call identifiable righteousness. So righteousness is not only implanted and imputed, but it's also identifiable.

Now what we want to begin now, in this series, studying the books of 1 and 2 Peter, is the practical side of that righteousness being identifiable. I heard a pastor recently give an illustration, which is fairly good. It's worth repeating. How many of you watched the World Cup series? Did anybody watch that? Did you notice how people are identifiable with their countries? They wave their flags. They wear certain clothes. They sit in certain groups. They sing certain songs. They do certain yells. They paint their faces a certain color. They are all identifying themselves with a certain nation.

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Now what we need to understand is that holiness is the way in which we identify ourselves as the nation of the kingdom of God. That is the way that we are recognized to be identifiable. So our righteousness is not only implanted in our regeneration, and imputed at our justification, but it is also identifiable in our holiness, in our sanctification. You should never separate your theology from your practice. Never separate your theology from your practice, or your practice from your theology.

Today we want to begin a series in the books of 1 and 2 Peter, because it is so practically oriented towards our personal expression of our identifiable holiness—this righteousness that God has implanted in us, the righteousness that God has imputed to us, and the righteousness now that works itself out through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, which now becomes identifiable, and identifies us as children of God. So we want to begin this new series on 1 Peter to help us understand practical holiness, and how we live it out.

I gave you a handout this morning, just to give you a quick identification and understanding of the book. Let me walk you through this, and then we'll begin a brief introduction into our passage in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

First of all, let me give you some background in the book of 1 Peter, so you'll understand its context, and the reason why we've chosen this to follow the series that Ted and Don has done for us.

In the closing days of Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus even predicted that Peter one day would strengthen the fellow believers of the church. That was a prediction that Jesus made, and appointed Peter to be the one who would do that. You can read about that in Luke chapter 22, verse 32.

Now in the first of these two books written by Peter, the first two letters, Peter did that very thing that Jesus said that he would do, encouraging Christian believers who were experiencing persecution, and who would soon experience the greater persecution of Nero, in the city of Rome, who falsely blamed Christians for the destruction of the city of Rome because of the fire that he started himself, in A.D. 64. Now Peter is the author. You'll see that in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 1. He is one of the original twelve apostles. He was formerly a fisherman in Capernaum, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was one of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, James, Peter and John.

On key occasions he was also the spokesperson for all of the disciples. When they needed a spokesperson, oftentimes Peter was the one who stood up and spoke for all the twelve apostles. You can read about that in Matthew chapter sixteen and John chapter six.

After his very serious failure of denying Christ that we are all very familiar with in Matthew 26, he went on to become an elder of the church, and became a key leader in the early church. You can read about that in Acts chapter five, and Acts chapter two. And according to this tradition, he suffered martyrdom in Rome by being crucified upside down in the year A.D. 67 or 68. The date and location of this particular book of Peter is somewhere around 63 or 64 A.D., just before Nero's persecutions and the death of Paul. Peter apparently wrote from what we would call Babylon. You'll see that in chapter 5, verse 13, which could be interpreted either as the ancient city of the Euphrates, or Rome,

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which is also referred to as Babylon. So we're not sure of its exact location, but we know the timing is roughly around 63 or 64 A.D.

Now it's important that we understand to whom he is writing, because that is where it becomes so applicable to us. He is writing to Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, those who were brought into the body of Christ, the Gentiles, who joined the Christian believers, who were scattered by persecution throughout several different provinces of Asia Minor. You'll see that in chapter 1, verse 1. So he's writing to a whole group, the body of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, who have been persecuted and scattered all over the place.

Remember Jesus' admonition to him is (*paraphrase*) "Peter, strengthen the church." "Feed My sheep." That's what he's doing in 1 Peter chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, and in the book of 2 Peter. He is strengthening the body of Christ, just as Jesus told him to do. He's feeding the sheep.

And that's why it's so important for us to understand how we need to study the books of 1 and 2 Peter, to help us have this identifiable righteousness, which is an expression of our holiness. One of the things we're going to spend a lot of time talking about is where the Scripture says, "Be holy, because I am holy." So what does that mean to us? That's where we are identified as being children of God. So it's important that we understand that the purpose of this book is really to encourage us in the midst of our persecution.

Now what is the purpose of the book? Well, there are several different purposes one might ascribe to it. First of all, to encourage and instruct Christians concerning persecution. This is a book that is going to teach us how to be persecuted and how to respond righteously, in the midst of our persecution.

We're going to see three things in this book. It's going to be made up of basically this: God's grace in salvation, God's grace in our submission, and God's grace in our suffering. That's an outline of the book that I'll cover for you in just a moment.

The second thing would be to instruct us concerning salvation. You'll see that in chapter 1, verses 2-10, and then concerning subjection or submission, and then talking about our suffering.

There are a couple of unique features that we need to understand about the book of 1 Peter before we get into it. First of all, it emphasizes Christ's sufferings, mentioning them in every chapter. Somewhere in every chapter of the books of 1 and 2 Peter, you're going to see that the sufferings of Christ are mentioned. Now there's a reason for that, which we'll discover as we go through this verse by verse.

Secondly, as one who himself failed several times, Peter shows a great tenderness in this letter, of what it means to be reinstated back into the grace of God. If anybody ever failed, Peter was the one who did that. And yet he talks about God's tenderness, and the restoration and reconciliation of Peter back to Himself. It's a very tender book.

His rhetorical style in this letter is similar to that of the speeches that he gave in Asia, that you read in the book of Acts. And, as far as length, here is an interesting fact. 1 Peter contains more Old Testament quotes than any other New Testament book, and we'll go through that. There is a reason for that, and we'll discover that as we go verse by verse.

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How about a comparison with some of the other writings of the Bible? Well, there's another book that also talks a lot about persecution, and that is 2 Corinthians, and both deal extensively with suffering, 2 Corinthians concerning the sufferings of Paul, and 1 Peter concerning the sufferings of Christians generally. Paul talks about his own suffering in 2 Corinthians. But in 1 Peter, Peter talks about the sufferings of all Christians, generally speaking. Both were addressed to Christians scattered abroad by persecution, and both are intensely practical. One of the reasons I have selected this book to study is because of the practicality of understanding how we are to respond in a suffering environment.

Now we need to understand that we are not suffering. There are those in the world who really are suffering. We've got it easy. But still, we need to understand three things—God's grace in our salvation, God's grace in our submission, and God's grace in our suffering. That's an outline of the book of 1 Peter.

So, if you'll turn to your handout, let me give you just the key theme. It would be this. The key theme of the book, in my judgment, is God's grace, and our living hope. I would suggest that the key verses would be 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3, and 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 12. Those would be two key verses I would offer for your consideration, as thematic expressions and summary statements of the whole book.

But let me walk you through the outline of the book, and then we'll begin to deal with it verse by verse, expositively.

First of all, the first section deals with God's grace in salvation. You'll see that in chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2, verse 10. We're going to discover what it means to live in hope, to live in holiness, and to live in harmony.

And then we go to God's grace in submission. You'll see that in chapter 2, verse 11 through chapter 3, verse 12. And here we will learn in God's grace how to submit to authorities. To whom do we submit? How do we submit, and when do we submit? It's all there for us. That's why it's God's grace and submission. God always works through a chain of command. You never see the Holy Spirit trying to be God (the Father), or Jesus trying to be God (the Father.) You see, what the Father ordained, the Son accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applies. He always works through a chain of command. That also includes our lives, in the role of the church, in our families, and in our government. So we need to understand how we submit, to whom do we submit, when do we submit, and when do we not submit? All of that is going to be covered for us under God's grace and submission.

Then we need to understand what it means to submit to masters. There are great instructions on how to manage people, and how do we respond as employees to people who manage us. Submitting in the home is a critical portion, chapter 3, verses 1-7.

And then submission in the church. We don't talk much about submission in the church. But God has a designed authority as to whom we are to be submissive to. Did you know that one of the primary responsibilities of church membership that's really quite simple? Submit to your elders. That's it. Church membership is submitting to your elders. People ask me, "Should I join this church, or should I join that church?" My first question is, can you submit to their elders, because that's your job description, as a

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member of the church. If you can't submit to their elders, then don't join the church, because you're violating the command in following your responsibility. That means this: you need to know the elders of the church! If you're going to join the church, you need to know who the elders are, because your responsibility is to submit to them! If you can't do that, then you are violating your own responsibilities. You see, church membership is really quite simple. There are very few things. We're going to talk a lot about that in this particular book. But one of those is, can you submit to your elders? That implies this. Instead of them interviewing you, you are to interview who? Interview them! Interview the pastor. Find out where his heart is. What is he preaching? What is he teaching? What is the vision? What is the mission of the church? Who are the leaders of the church? How are they appointed? How are they selected? Why are they there? What is their maturity level, because your responsibility and my responsibility is to submit to them. We're going to learn a lot about that. So there is submission to the church. We don't talk about that enough! We talk about submitting to authority, but we never talk about submission in the church. Peter has some wonderful instructions about our practical, identifiable holiness, and what it means to be submissive, in the church context.

And then we'll talk about God's grace and suffering, chapter 3, verse 13 to chapter 5, verse 11. We'll talk about what does it mean to have Christ be your Lord? There is a salvation proclamation that says that you trust Jesus as your Savior, and make Him your Lord. Well, we don't make Christ anything. He has already been made Lord. What does that mean, that we trust Him as Lord? We don't make Him Lord; God has already beat us to the punch. (*Laughter.*)

We need to have Christ's attitude—chapter 4, verses 1-11. How do we think? The little card we've been passing out, "Think right, act right, feel right." What is the attitude that Christ had in the midst of all of this suffering that was going on? How do we glorify Christ's name in the midst of our suffering? What is our response? You see, that's identifiable holiness, as a result of the sanctification process produced by the Holy Spirit. It's identifiable. You and I ought to be recognizable in the midst of our daily activities that we are followers of Christ, because of our identifiable righteousness.

And we need to look for Christ's return. One of the great encouragements we have is that the Lord Jesus will return in all of His glory. And then we need to depend upon Christ's grace.

So that is our outline. The big themes here, brothers, would be these: God's grace in salvation, God's grace in submission, and God's grace in suffering. That's how we will understand what it means to have implanted righteousness, imputed righteousness, and our responsibility is to have identifiable righteousness, as a result of the sanctification work of the Holy Spirit.

So, with that in mind, any questions on the outline of the book? I just want to help you to understand the context of what we'll be talking about over the next couple of years. (*Laughter.*) Any questions on that? Yes please, Brian?

Brian: I just wanted to hint on the tension between on how we're already sanctified, we're already considered holy, we're already all of these things. Yet, we are still responsible. Are you going to talk about that tension?

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Bruce: Yes. (*Laughter.*) When and how, I don't know, but yes. Any other questions?

Now let me just give you a quick overview of what we talk about when we're talking about the holiness of God, as Don and Ted have done a wonderful job of introducing us to the concept of God's holiness, which basically means to be different. Essentially, that is what it means. It's identifiable; we're to be different. When you apply the holiness of God, it calls attention to what I would refer to as His otherness. We talk about God in all of His glory. We talk about God in all of His attributes. But when we talk about the holiness of God, ascribing holiness to God Himself, it refers to His otherness. There is this unknown otherness about God. Let me give you some examples.

Turn in your bibles to Mark chapter 4, verses 37-41. Now here we see that Jesus calms the sea, the historical event of Jesus calming the sea. In Mark chapter 4, verses 37-41, He calms the sea, and these very seasoned sailors, who were skilled sailors, were frightened by the storm. But then Jesus calmed the storm, and notice what they didn't do. They didn't thank Him, you see, because something took place, because they were more afraid of Him than they were of the threat of their own destruction. They never said, "Thank you for calming the storm." We're told in Mark chapter four that they were petrified by the storm. Jesus calms the storm, and their response is not to say, "Oh, thank you for rescuing us!" Their response was that they were exposed to what I'm calling the otherness of God, to God's holiness. They were more afraid of Him in His Person than they were the threat of their own destruction, because of the fearful storm. And notice their response. "What manner of man is this?" That's because the holiness of Jesus was exposed, His otherness. That's the concept of our understanding of God's holiness.

How about another illustration for us? Luke chapter five. Jesus goes fishing with Peter. Peter and his fellow fishermen had been casting the nets on one side of the boat, and caught nothing. And so Jesus says, (*paraphrase*), "Put your nets on the other side of the boat." And Peter almost goes along with Jesus just to sort of humor Him, saying, (*paraphrase*), "Sure thing. We've been working here all day. We're the fishermen, and You're telling us we ought to be on the other side of the boat?" Notice what Peter didn't say when they caught this magnificent catch of fish. He didn't say, "Thank you." What does he say? "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." You see, he was exposed to the otherness of God, the holiness of God. He was exposed to that.

And notice his response. "What manner of man is this?" the sailors said. Peter said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." He was exposed, because he came in contact with the otherness, the holiness of God.

You see, the reason, friends, that the holiness of God and the gospel is so repugnant to sinners, is because it exposes His otherness, that which we do not understand in our own mindset. People are more interested in His friendship, but not the demands of His holiness, because it's the otherness of God that we just don't understand. It's very interesting that Jesus was not killed because He said, "Come unto me," but He was put to death because He said what?

Participant: He's the Son of God.

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Bruce: He said, (*paraphrase*), “I’m the Son of God, and I am holy,” because he claimed to be holy. You see, people resented His nonsocial standard of living. They resented that, because it exposed the otherness of the Christian life.

Let me read from one of my favorite authors, bishop J. C. Ryle, who describes holiness this way. “True holiness does not consist merely in believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. Our tongues, our tempers, our natural passions and inclinations, our conduct as parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects, our dress, our use of time, our behavior in business, our demeanor in sickness and in health, our demeanor in riches and in poverty, all these are matters which are fully treated by the inspired writers of our righteousness. They are not content with a general statement of what we should believe and feel, and how we are to have the roots of holiness planted in our hearts. They dig down lower. They go down into very particular items of our conduct that is identifiable. They specify minutely what a holy man ought to do and be in his own family, by his own fireside, if he abides in Christ. I doubt whether this sort of teaching is very sufficiently popular in the movement of the present day. When people talk of having received such a blessing, and having found the higher life, after hearing some earnest advocate of holiness by faith and self-conscious consecration, while their families and friends see no improvement, and no increased sanctity in their daily tempers and behavior, immense harm is done to the body of Christ.”

Immense harm is done to the body of Christ because we say one thing and live out something differently. They don’t see the identifiable righteousness, and that may be because it may not have been implanted. It may not have been imputed, because there is no identifiable righteousness. We’ve got people running around trying to be righteous in their own strength, and they can’t do it, because the righteousness of God may never have been implanted in their regeneration! It may never have been imputed to them in their justification! And therefore, it is certainly not going to be identifiable in their sanctification.

And he goes on to say this. “Holiness, we surely ought to remember, does not consist merely of inward sensations and impressions. It is much more than tears, sighs and bodily excitements, and a quickened pulse, and a passionate feeling of attachment or entertainment, to our own favorite preachers, or our own religious party or denomination, and a readiness to quarrel with everyone who does not agree with us. It is something of the image of Christ, which can be seen and observed by those, and by others in our private life, in our habits, in our character, and in our doing.”

Romans chapter 8, verse 29. “For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.” That’s why we’re going to study 1 Peter. Do we take on the likeness of Christ? Is our righteousness identifiable in these areas of our lives? That’s why this is such a practical book, and Ted and Don have done a wonderful job giving you the big picture of holiness and righteousness. Now we need to take it down and say, “How does it manifest itself?” What about the struggle I have that Brian just talked about, the tension that exists? How do we handle that? Peter is going to talk about all of that.

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How about 1 Corinthians 15:49? “And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the Man from heaven.” That’s holiness. You see, that’s the identifiable righteousness where the Biblical writers really delve down into the conduct and thought patterns of our lives.

Charles Spurgeon says this: “Holiness is the visible side of our salvation. A holy life is not an ascetic, gloomy or solitary life, but a life regulated by divine truth, and faithful to Christ. It is living above the world while we are still in the world.”

I would summarize it this way. Holiness is God giving His image to us, and then seeing His image in us. Holiness is the visible side of our salvation. And I’ll tell you what, brothers, if you do not have implanted righteousness at your regeneration, if you do not have imputed righteousness at your justification, you will never have any identifiable righteousness, in a manmade sense, in your sanctification. This is something supernatural that God does, and it identifies us with the likeness of Christ. Now, as we’re going to see from our study of Peter, there is no holiness without a warfare. Now I want to prepare you for this. It’s kind of what Brian was alluding to..

The holiness of God doesn’t come by yielding yourself to God. We flippantly say, “You just need to yield yourself.” Well, let me talk about that for a minute. Yielding yourself basically says that you sit back passively in the hands of God and let Him do something, and what you do is, you just yield. Well, that’s a nice thought, but how in the world do you yield anything? Only one time in the Scripture are we ever told to yield ourselves. One time, only once, and that’s in Romans chapter 6, verses 13-19. And five times it talks about our yielding ourselves, not to do something to be sanctified, but to be placing ourselves passively in the hands of one another, so that we can be fit for service. In other words, you yield yourself for God’s service. You turn yourself over to God’s service. But in this battle of sanctification and identifiable righteousness, it’s a warfare.

Let me tell you how the Scriptures teach about it. Twenty-five to thirty times the New Testament teaches that believers are taught plainly to use active exertion in their desire for holiness. You don’t sit back and passively yield yourself to God. That doesn’t do anything. The only time the Scripture says to yield yourself to anything is that you yield yourself to His service. You don’t let the members of your body become slaves of sin, but slaves to righteousness. So read Romans, chapter six. You’ll notice that this passage talks about yielding ourselves to God’s service.

But when you talk about holiness, brothers, the Scriptures really teach that it’s very much an active warfare, and that we are being addressed as being responsible for doing what Christ would have us do. It’s a warfare; it’s a fight; it’s a struggle. It’s not passively yielding yourself, just to sit back passively and do nothing. It’s actively pursuing holiness. You’ve got to pursue holiness with the grace that God gives you. That’s why this grace in our salvation comes first, then grace in our submission, then grace in our suffering. there’s a sequence there.

It starts with grace in our salvation. If you don’t have that implanted righteousness, if you don’t have that imputed righteousness, you’re certainly not going to have the identifiable righteousness in your sanctification. It’s a warfare, it’s a struggle. You

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actively pursue this. You don't sit back and just yield yourself. You work at it, you struggle; it's a battle.

Let me give you some of the words that the Scripture uses. It's a holy violence. It's a conflict. It's a warfare. It's a fight. It's a wrestling. Those are the words that are spoken about a person who is pursuing holiness, and they are characteristics of the true believer, because you've got to understand that holiness involves a warfare, because we have to use our concerted effort to do that through the grace of God in our salvation. There is no holiness without a warfare, a struggle, the tension that exists. How do I do that? It's something that you and I purposely have to pursue with great anticipation and great exertion. You don't sit back and yield yourself to become holy. You fight and work for it, through the grace that God gives you.

That's why Peter is such a very good book for us to study, because this book of Peter is a very warm and hopeful book. It shows us the victory against suffering, to make us holy, and it's a very practical book.

Peter's life is really a picture of this book. Hopefully, we would understand that, because he is the author of it. But notice this. Not only do we see his struggles and our struggles, but we also see his victories. Also, the end and the result is a man made holy, and his person, because of the sufferings he went through. So you're going to see in Peter's life that he is a perfect example of everything he is talking about, because he had his failures, and he had his victories, and the end result was what? He was made a holy man because of his struggles, because of his warfare, and his active pursuit of it. It wasn't his sitting back and letting go and letting God.

There is such a great paucity of teaching on this thing of warfare anymore, because we don't like to talk about it. We want to think that it's an easy life. God has given us an abundant life. Therefore, just sit back and yield yourself. But to yield yourself is just totally irrelevant. You've got to fight for it; it's a warfare. You've got to struggle! It's a battle; there's a tension that exists. You and I have to exercise the grace of God in all this. That's why sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit, not a work of man. Yet, we have to exercise our skills that God gives us, and the grace that He gives us to fight this battle, known as personal holiness.

So let's take a look at the greeter. Peter is the greeter. Those who are greeted are the scattered aliens all over the place, and the greeting is "grace and peace." Open your Bibles, please, to 1 Peter chapter one. Any questions on what we've covered so far? I'm just trying to give you the understanding of what we're going to be looking at over the next couple of years from a hundred and fifty thousand feet, to understand the concept of holiness as a fight. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Bruce, do you have those twenty-five to thirty verses about how a believer actively participates in the warfare? I don't know if you have that.

Bruce: I can get them for you.

Ted: I think that would be very helpful.

Bruce: Do we really understand this, that this is a fight, brothers? You know, the three words that describe the history of the church from Genesis to Revelation are *remnant*—it's not everybody—*persecution*, and *warfare*. We're involved in spiritual

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warfare. Part of our holiness fight is a warfare against the system of this world, and so I'll try to get those verses for you. Yes, please?

Participant: My experience is that I can't handle this by myself. I need an accountability partner.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: Bible study, reading Scripture, prayer. When I start separating myself from that, I really start to get lost.

Bruce: Absolutely. Great point! We're not designed to be in this fight alone. That's what team work is. Team work is this: t-e-a-m—together, everyone accomplishes more. That means this. Whatever you do well by yourself spiritually, you're going to do it better when you do it with a brother who holds you accountable. That's why it's so important that we be here every Friday to discuss these things together, because accountability is critical in this warfare, in our battle.

Now look at 1 Peter, chapter one. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect, exiles in the Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, and for sprinkling with His blood. May grace and peace be multiplied to you."

Do you notice how he talks about this? First of all, he says that this is to the elect. He's talking about those who have had the righteousness of God implanted in them at their regeneration. That means that, because they have had the implanted righteousness at their regeneration, they're going to have the imputed righteousness at their justification. Those are to whom he is writing. He's not writing this to the whole world. He's writing it to those people who are going to be involved in the warfare known as personal holiness. It's described here as "the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience."

Why does the Holy Spirit sanctify us? He does that for obedience. That's the battle for holiness, "to Jesus Christ, and for the sprinkling with His blood."

So I want you to notice the name of Simon Peter, and how the Scripture teaches this to us. First of all, Simon is the Greek form of the Hebrew word which means "to hear." Sometimes Peter was just a hearer. Then you have the word Peter. It's the Greek form of the Aramaic name Cephas, which means "stone," or "rock." So sometimes he is referred to as a hearer. Sometimes he's referred to as a rock. And then you put the two together-- Simon Peter—and you have the combination of both. And you have an accurate New Testament style of using the nickname "Simon Rock."

And so you'll notice that next week we're going to spend some time going through this. He went from a reed to a rock. He was blown in the wind. Remember, when he failed, he denied Christ. He was a reed. He just heard things, and he just responded in his own strength. But at the end of the book he becomes a rock. That's exactly what God wants to do for us in the process of holiness. He wants to take us from being a reed, like Simon, to being a rock, like Peter. This is His design for all of us, and you'll see that in the very first couple of verses. "By the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling with His blood."

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So that's going to be our introduction. And so I want to give you some time to ask any questions about the big picture of this, because I want to go into this next week, and talk about how God is going to take us from being a reed to a rock. So are there any questions you have so far on what we've covered, just the big picture of the concept of holiness, or questions you have about what Ted or Don taught us in previous weeks to introduce this concept to us? Yes, please, Tim?

Tim: Can you say something about in the warfare, who or what we're fighting against?

Bruce: We're fighting against the system of this world. As Paul writes to us in Romans chapter 12: "Do not be conformed to the system of this world." The word *world* is used in five different contexts in the Scripture. Most of the time, it's referring to a system, in other words, its values, its ethics, its decisions, its convictions. There's a system out there that is contrary to everything that Christ represents. And so our battle is against the system of this world, and that's going to be certain individuals. But it's also something so much bigger than a person. It's a whole system, a system of thought, a system of falsehood, a system of false religion, a system of paucity of truth. It can be all-inclusive, but it's really a system that we're fighting. And that system is just very systematically taking over the world.

So that's our struggle. How do we become identifiably righteous in the context of fighting a system that is anti-us? It can really be defined as anything that is anti-Christ, that is the system of this world. That's where our warfare is. Anything that is anti-Christ is the system of this world. Yes, please?

Participant: In your thoughts, and submitting to authorities,-- starting with verse 13, on being subject to authorities,--

Bruce: Right.

Participant: How do you work the authority submission with the problem of warfare against the system of this world? These people, at this time, were forming a new religion, and they were persecuted all over the place. It's amazing, what happened to it, and how it affected the Roman Empire at that time.

Bruce: Absolutely. It changed the world.

Participant: Right. And they were being persecuted. But I don't understand. When they say, "submit to authority," I can understand the pacification of it, but how does that relate to the warfare?

Bruce: Go back to your outline, please, that I handed to you today. We've got to be very careful, friends, not to take verses out of context. You've got to take verses in the way they come. That's the advantage of expositional preaching and teaching. In other words, you'll never understand what it means to be submissive until you understand God's grace in your salvation. So, before we ever get to that, we need to talk about what it means to live in hope. You cannot be submissive if you don't have any hope. You can't be submissive if you don't have any harmony. You can't be submissive if you don't have any holiness. So you've got to understand that we've got to study a bunch of things before we get to that verse, because when we get to that verse, it will help us understand how to apply it, because it's based on what we learned previously. So you can't just take

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a verse out of its context and say, “how,” or “what?” We’ve got to say, “All right. Let me study the verses right before that which are going to lead me to that, because of the divine order in which these verses are constructed for us.” So we will get to that, but we’ve got to study a bunch of things before we get to that.

So be careful not to take things out of context, where you just pull something out and say, “What about this?” You’ve got to understand where this verse fits into the context of the rest of that passage and the book and the theme of the book. So we’ll get to that. But don’t jump ahead too far. We need to have a bunch of understandings before we get to that, so that we have the grace of God in our salvation, so that we understand that now I have the grace of God in my submission. But the grace of God in salvation has to come first in understanding that. Make sure your walk is through that first. It’s a great question. Thank you. Anything else? Don?

Don: Bruce, you talked about warfare, and the paucity of teaching. What do you think contributes to that paucity of teaching today? Why isn’t that emphasized in a lot of our teaching?

Bruce: Don’s question is, why do we not talk about spiritual warfare in our pulpits as much as we ought to? Why is that? Many reasons. First of all, it’s not going to draw crowds. (*Laughter.*) Second, it’s not entertaining. Third, it’s convicting. Those are the three primary reasons I would say, Don, that we don’t talk about spiritual warfare, because it’s not going to draw people in. Remember what Jeremiah Burrows said in 1647? This is my phraseology; I’m re-phrasing this. “When money becomes important, numbers become critical and doctrine is watered down.”

Look at the number of churches that are in debt. I’ve had people in my own church say, “We can’t have those people come, because they can’t afford us.” In other words, they can’t keep up the ministry, because we’re in debt. We have these wonderful, elaborate buildings that cause us to be in debt, and therefore we have to make sure that people come to pay for the bills, because we’re in debt. It’s like an insidious cancer.

So I would say, first of all, the primary reason would be this. It doesn’t draw crowds. Secondly, it’s not entertaining. And thirdly, it’s too convicting. They don’t want to hear it. People don’t want to hear about warfare. They want to hear John 10:10, (*paraphrase*), “I give you an abundant life.” And they define what is abundant life. You have all kinds of theologies that talk about the abundant life. That’s what people want to hear. They don’t want to hear that it’s a struggle. They don’t want to hear about the tension. They don’t want to hear about the fight you have to go through. This is a warfare, men! We’re up against the system of the world that is anti-everything that you and I talk about. Now we need to be prepared to do that. That’s what Peter is going to do for us. Yes, Bob?

Bob: But Bruce, there’s a conflict here, because I hear so many people say that you can’t do that. You’ve got seekers out there, who are seeking, and if they’re seeking, you’ve got to start them at least with something that’s palatable, something that gives them some happiness and joy when they leave. How do we make that transition? How do we deal with that?

Participant: Turn off the television. (*Laughter.*)

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Bruce: Well, first of all, Romans tells us that no one seeks God. First of all, Scripture says that no one seeks God. So I wouldn't even use the word "seeker." No one seeks Him. People don't seek God; God seeks people! That's election. Now Spurgeon says this. "You don't take people to the university of predestination and election until you've gone to the college of repentance and faith." You preach the gospel. The gospel is "the power... unto salvation for all who believe." Our greatest weapon is our message. It's the message of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. That's the basis of where we start. Our goal is not to get people to come. Our goal is to preach truth. And the only evaluation of any ministry you can have is this: was truth proclaimed?, because when you remove truth, there's no power!

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Now certainly that does not give us license to be sloppy, or a license to be Bible bashers. If you're going to be a Bible basher, bash yourself and not somebody else. But all I'm saying is, truth is our greatest weapon, men! And we've got to be committed to preaching truth. The truth will do its work. We don't have to make it happen. God is a sovereign, righteous, holy God, who will bring to salvation those He has chosen from before the foundation of the world. We're cooperating with what He has already instituted. We don't need to create a new system, a new paradigm. I hear this phrase all the time. "The church needs to have a new paradigm." I just get sick when I hear that. That means that we've got to come up with something that's not working. It works! It does work! It has worked in history. It has worked for generations. It has worked for centuries. It will continue to work, if we proclaim the truth. That's it! Just proclaim the truth, and part of that truth is this. Spiritual life is a warfare.

Now you don't start off with that. You start off with the grace of God in salvation. That's why Peter starts off in this book with the grace of God in salvation. He doesn't talk about submission until he talks about salvation. He doesn't talk about suffering till he talks about submission. You see, you don't know how to suffer until you know how to submit. You don't know how to submit until you understand your salvation. There is a sequence here, brothers. We need to keep that in its context. When you understand God's grace in salvation, then you understand what it means to have God's grace in submission. You now know how to submit, and why and when you do it. And, as a result of that, it's going to teach you how to suffer, and do it righteously, because you'll have identifiable righteousness. So God's grace in salvation must come first. That's where we start. That's the proclamation of truth. Yes, Dick?

Dick: Bruce, isn't the church, the broader church, full of believers, and if the gospel is being preached, and you have nonbelievers in the setting, they're going to hear the gospel. But why is it that you only stay at the 40,000-foot level, and you don't focus on the holiness of God, and go to the depths of holiness, and go to the depths of the depravity of man? It's part of the gospel, but it's going deeper.

Bruce: You have to ask every pastor that question. That's an individual response from an individual pastor. You have to ask him. The ministry of the church starts in the pulpit. It's what comes out of the pulpit that drives everything. If you're not getting it in

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your pulpit, then you need to ask your pastor, “Why not?” I can’t answer that for every pastor. I can only tell you what I would do, and what I’ve done, and what I am doing. But you would have to ask that question of your individual pastor. Yes, Jim?

Jim: Bruce, it just seems to me that so many of the pastors, I mean a huge percentage, really just don’t believe in the sovereignty of God, expressed in the Reformation.

Bruce: Exactly. One of the things that many pastors in my judgment—I can’t speak for other pastors—but I would just say that the church at large, since Dick has asked a great big broad question, I don’t think we understand the implications of the fall. We really don’t understand the implications, and the deep-rootedness of the fall of man in the garden of Eden. You see, it all starts there. If you don’t understand that, you have no understanding of what it means to be redeemed, and the resurrection of Christ. You see, we don’t understand the implications of that, because we think we are born good. Until you understand the Fall, it’s tough to build off of that. Do you understand that? Yes, Bill?

Bill: Part of the discussion with regard to the whole concept of what’s going on in the pulpits, on Sundays, or seeker sensitive, or whatever the case may be, is a failure of us to understand what God calls us to do on Lord’s Day worship, and what worship is.

Bruce: Sure.

Bill: God is very specific with regard to how man is to approach Him. It has been that way throughout Scripture. Obviously, the Reformers saw that there was a formal and rigid type of a process that God calls us to, and it continues through today, and yet we’ve thrown that away. We’ve kind of made it up as we go along. And the point is, God calls us to worship so that we can give awe and glory and honor to Him, and that’s certainly not something that nonbelievers are going to be able to be part of. So I think that what is going on for Lord’s Day worship really isn’t about bringing people into the church. It’s about people who are believers coming before God, and bowing before the Most High.

Bruce: We have relegated worship to get a blessing. In other words, I go to church to get blessed. How many times have you heard somebody say, “I’m not going back to that church because I did not receive a blessing?” Well, guess what? You weren’t supposed to get one. You were supposed to what? Give one! Worship is a verb. It’s something you do!

Now we don’t understand what worship is. We’ve relegated it to my receiving a blessing, and people go church hopping. There was a study done a couple years ago that I came across by the Gallup agency. It said this. In the United States of America, in every county in America, the fifty states, not one county had an increase in church membership. Now, you had churches increasing their membership, because you had what? Church hoppers. “I’m not going to go there, because I didn’t get a blessing.” But there were no new conversions coming to increase the body life of the church. In not one county in the United States was there an increase in church membership, just church hopping, because we’ve relegated worship to be a blessing that I get.

You see, we have to be very, very cautious. We understand that the church is for believers. What is the mission of the church? To equip the saints and do the work of the ministry. The book of Ephesians tells us that. You don’t need to have a mission

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statement. People spend millions of dollars on creating a mission statement in the church, when it has already been given. Equip the saints and do the work! That is what the church does. That implies something.

Now that doesn't mean that we're not sensitive to evangelism. Everything we do is evangelistic, because, when you have identifiable righteousness, guess what? You're evangelistic, because you are putting on display the life of Christ. That's evangelism. You're being conformed to His likeness. That's evangelism. Everything that we do is evangelistic, because we have imputed righteousness, we have implanted righteousness, and now we have identifiable righteousness, and that is part of evangelism. People see it in your life, in your conduct, in your family, just as J. C. Ryle wrote. It's when they see it that they begin to say, "What is this?" That's evangelism. Evangelism is not some program you initiate. Evangelism is a style of life. That's identifiable righteousness. It's called holiness. Yes sir, you had a question.

Participant: You know, when you were talking about the warfare, and how it's not popular in preaching, there's a quote. I was trying to think of what it was. I found it. It's by G. K. Chesterton, and it says, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult, and left untried."

Bruce: Amen. Good statement. Now brothers, we need to be very, very cautious. We don't get together on Friday mornings to bash the church. That's not what we're about. Please understand that. So forgive me if I've ever taken the position that says, "I know it all, and I know how to do it all." That's not what I'm saying at all.

We need to apply this to ourselves personally. It's personal application of our theology that we start with. That's what's going to change our individual churches. It's not going to your pastor and saying, "Why don't you do this? How come you don't do that? How come you're not preaching this? Why don't you do that?" That's not what we're talking about. We're saying, "Make this practical in your own life." That's what we're going to see in the book of 1 Peter, because Peter is such an example of a man who failed! And he went from being a reed, blowing in the wind, to being a rock, on which the church is found. That is exactly what Christ wants to do with us, to take us from being a reed to a rock. But that involves a holy, aggressive, active pursuit of holiness.

Participant: I know it's 7:30, and everyone has to go to work.

Second Participant: Not today. (*Laughter.*) It's the Fourth of July.

First Participant: My question is going to be on how—

Bruce: Remember, you can't say "how."

Participant: Right. So, put yourself back in Kansas City, whenever you were leading a church. We, as laymen, instead of complaining, how can a—(I know I'm saying "how")—(*laughter*), but how can we, as laymen, lovingly come alongside our elders and our pastors, and have this conversation with them? We're not put in a place of leadership. But we just want to have a broad conversation, to get them to think.

Bruce: Okay, we'll stop right there. I've got you. The second responsibility of church membership. The first one is this: be obedient to your elders. The second is what? Pray for your leaders! Are you guys praying your butts off for your pastors? If you're not, then you are violating your church responsibilities. Pray for your pastor!

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Start with that, and see what happens. You don't need to go with a check list and say, "Why are you doing this, and not doing that?" Pray for your pastors daily, repetitiously, frequently, as often as you can. Pray for them, and see what the Lord does, because what is going to happen is that prayer changes you, not him. It changes you. Then you'll know what to do. Submit to your elders, and pray for your leaders. Start with that as a good church member, and see what happens. Yes, please?

Participant: Not only pray for your leaders. Let your leaders know that you are praying for them.

Bruce: Amen. What a great thought!

Participant: Because that opens up his mind. "Why did you pray for me?"

Bruce: Excellent; that's a great thought! Let them know that you're supporting them. But don't try to go in with a checklist of a clone of things you need him to become. That's not what it's about. Pray for them, and see what the Holy Spirit does with you. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: The other day, at a Bible study, a group of us noticed, after listening to Paul in Ephesians really lay out the Christian life, that we were all convicted. But we were not condemned. We wanted to hear this. We needed to hear this. We were thankful to hear this.

Bruce: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: Meanwhile, we were convicted, as we ought to have been.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Bishop Rodgers: If you're asking (*unclear*), not necessarily a question, those who are not elect may not feel that way, but the body of Christ will rejoice in being convicted.

Bruce: Absolutely! What a great summary! That's exactly it. There's a great tension there, but you see, you're not condemned. "There is no condemnation for those of us who" are seekers. (*Laughter.*) It doesn't say that! "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" There is no condemnation, but you can be under conviction. I'm under conviction every day! The greatest thing I can say is, "Lord, keep my sin ever before me." But, at the same time, I know I'm not condemned. But I need to have my sin exposed. Somebody says, "What is the most important prayer in all the Bible?" In my judgment, for me personally, it's the prayer in Luke, where the man said, "Have mercy upon me, the sinner." That's the most important prayer I can say every day, because I need that conviction. But I realize this: I'm not condemned! That's an expression of the righteousness that has been imputed, implanted and identifiable. Yes, please?

Participant: When I was a pastor, I can remember times when preaching, that people would literally wince, when I would be talking about suffering, and it's part and parcel of the Christian life. And if you look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he talks a lot about it, particularly putting on the armor of God, because you cannot do it alone.

Bruce: Amen. Amen. Yes, please?

Participant: One of the things that you said about worship is that I can worship at home.

Bruce: Yes.

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Participant: But I come to the church for the purpose to be with the people.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: And to hear the message. I feel that it's my responsibility to worship (*unclear.*) I don't see that happening a lot of times. And that's like what Pastor Bill said about suffering, for example. I agree with that, but I also see that churches don't preach about Satan and warfare, because they're afraid to preach.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: (*Unclear.*) So I think that there's a big problem with the church, first of all, with the way we worship. It's not just the congregation. It has to be the pastor, the elders, and the deacons. They need to preach in such a way as to attract people. Look at Joel O'Steen. (*Unclear.*) But, I think it is still the responsibility of the preacher, and the elders and deacons, to attract the people. Worship can be done at home, and worship can be done at church. (*unclear*) **Bruce:** Worship is a style of life. It's not an activity that you do at eleven o'clock on the Lord's Day. It's a style of life. When you worship, you go to give a blessing.

Now we need to understand this. The first thing that Peter is going to teach us is this, and I'm going to summarize it this way. When you compare the apostles, the apostle Paul is the apostle of faith, and faith alone. John is the apostle of love. But Peter is the apostle of hope. Well, let's see that. The very first thing He says is, (*paraphrase:* "You live in hope." We're going to talk about that next week. The very first thing is, He gives us hope.

You see, the reason that we can go through and battle the system of this world is because we have hope in the eternal destiny and return of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His glory. So he is going to say that the first thing you've got to understand is that you have hope. Yes, it's a battle. You're involved in warfare. But you've got hope, because of the grace of God in your salvation. It starts with living in hope. And that hope lets you live in harmony, and that harmony lets you live in holiness. Yes, Dale?

Dale: Two spirits dwell within my breast. One is foul, the other blest. The one I love, the other I hate. The one I feed will dominate.

Bruce: He's our poet laureate. (*Laughter.*) Well, brothers, listen. I'm glad we could have this little discussion. Be prepared, because this is going to be very, very practical. And it may take us a while to go through it, so we're in no rush, because it's such an important ingredient that we mix our theology with our practice, and that is called holiness.

Let's pray. Well, Lord, You can see where we are. We're all over the place. (*Laughter.*) And so we are so absolutely dependent upon Your Holy Spirit to be our Teacher. It's not Don, it's not Ted, it's not me, it's not Bishop Rodgers. It's just Your grace and mercy through the work of the Holy Spirit. So Father, just open our eyes, that we might behold the truth. Give us a great love for Your Scripture. Help us recognize that it is sufficient in all things for life and godliness, that we don't need outside services

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and outside sources to tell us what to do. Father, just give us the insight, and give us the commitment to believe Your word. It is holy. It is the way in which You reveal Yourself to us. And Father, give us the deep conviction that we can trust You, because we can trust Your word. And we can trust Your word, because we can trust You. And may it be so, for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!" (*Applause.*)